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# NUTRITION COMMITTEE NEWS

For exchange of information on nutrition education and school lunch activities.

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## OUTLOOK FOR FOOD, 1954

The outlook for food supplies, demand, and retail prices in 1954 is similar to the general food situation of 1953, according to present indications.

**Food Supplies.** Pointing to a good food supply for 1954 are these situations: The year began with large stocks of food grains, major dairy products, and fresh and processed fruits and vegetables from the 1953 output. Production of food crops in 1954 will be substantial if weather and other growing conditions are at least average. The large number of cattle on farms and ranches and the number of chickens on farms on January 1, plus the plentiful supply of feed indicate continued large supplies of meat, poultry, and dairy products in 1954. Less pork than in 1953 will be available through most of the present year, but supplies of beef and veal will be near-record large in size.

**Retail Prices.** Consumers' spendable incomes in the first half of 1954 are expected to average close to the record level of 1953. Even if earnings should be a little less, take-home pay which takes into account recent reductions in income taxes is not expected to differ substantially from last year. Thus, it appears likely that consumer spending will be sustained and that the demand for food will continue at a high level and result in food expenditures in 1954 similar to those in 1953.

Retail food prices stand now about where they were 2 years ago and the forecast is for no marked change in their general level. However, prices will reflect annual and seasonal differences in supplies of some foods. Compared to 1953, retail prices in 1954 can be expected to be about the same for most of the popular foods.

**Nutritive Content Of Food Supplies.** Civilian consumption of food per person in 1954 is likely to be close to that of a year ago since no significant change is in prospect in the pattern of food use. As a result, nutrients available in our food supplies are expected to remain about the same. A slight decline in thiamine is likely in view of the anticipated small reduction in pork consumption. After 3 years of lower average vitamin A levels, a return to higher ones is expected with the increased supplies and greater consumption of sweetpotatoes. No change in ascorbic acid content of food supplies is anticipated in 1954 over 1953.

Nutrients available for civilian consumption per capita per day in 1948 and estimates for 1953 (the latest year for which data are available) are shown below:

NUTRIENT:	1948	1953 (estimate)	1953 as percent of 1948
Food energy .....Cal.	3,210	3,200	100
Protein .....Gm.	94	96	102
Fat .....Gm.	139	141	101
Carbohydrate .....Gm.	403	395	98
Calcium .....Gm.	1.02	1.04	102
Iron .....Mg.	16.9	17.2	102
Vitamin A value .....I.U.	8,200	7,800	95
Thiamine .....Mg.	1.89	1.87	99
Riboflavin .....Mg.	2.30	2.34	102
Niacin .....Mg.	19.1	19.9	104
Folic acid .....Mg.	.133	.134	101
Ascorbic acid .....Mg.	120	115	96

1948 was selected as the year for comparison because in the spring of that year the latest nationwide survey of diets of urban families was made. Data telling how well fed families are do help to give meaning to per capita averages. The survey indicated that families in cities are more likely to have diets below the level of the National

### IN THIS ISSUE

This issue deals with the 1954 outlook for food supplies and retail prices and with the application of economic information to food management. Such knowledge is useful to every worker who has responsibilities in the field of food and nutrition. It is important to nutritionists in community, public health, and extension agencies and home economists in social welfare who are guiding homemakers and youths in planning the family's food in relation to its income. It is of value to dietitians and other food managers who plan and buy food for institutions, public dining rooms, and school lunchrooms. It is background information for teachers who are training workers for these types of work as well as those who are teaching food and nutrition at any level of education.

Research Council's 1948 recommendations in calcium than in other nutrients studied. Only 60 to 70 percent of the survey families had diets providing calcium at recommended levels. About 80 percent had diets providing recommended amounts of ascorbic acid and the three B-vitamins—thiamine, riboflavin, and niacin—after some deduction was made for average losses in cooking. Nearly 90 percent had diets meeting allowances for vitamin A value, iron, and protein.

Diets probably were about as good in 1953 as in 1948 since incomes and retail food prices in cities increased similarly, about 10 percent, between the 2 periods and national food supplies of 1953 were within 5 percent of those of 1948 for each nutrient measured. With no great change in the food and income situation in view for 1954, diets can continue as good or even better than they were in 1948. Nutrition education programs provide the means for making better use of the food supplies that are available and that families can afford to buy.

## **COST OF THE FAMILY'S FOOD**

In terms of home management decisions that have to be made in planning and in budgeting the family's income for food, the prospect of relative stability in the cost of food is important.

**Family Food Expense in 1948.** City families spent on the average about one-third of their incomes for food in the spring of 1948. Averages varied from 17 percent by families in the highest income group, \$7,500 and over, to 74 percent by those with incomes under \$1,000. Since the 1948 urban survey both food prices and family incomes have risen similarly so this relationship would still be expected to hold.

With a large share of the family's income going for food the homemaker is ever striving to get more for her money. At the same time she wants to please her family with the menus and foods they prefer. Food management tools needed for success and ease in accomplishing this goal include a flexible master food plan which in broad terms fits her individual family. Along with this the homemaker must have knowledge of how to make good nutritional choices among the alternatives in foods that she finds in the market from week to week.

**Use of a Food Plan.** Among the various methods by which families can construct a master food plan suited to the needs of its members and to its economic situation are the food plans developed by the Home Economics Research Branch of the Agricultural Research Service. As many of our readers know, the plans list weekly quantities of foods in 11 different groups suited to persons varying in sex, age, and physical activity. Quantities given in the plans will provide nutritionally adequate diets

if choices of foods within the groups are customary ones as indicated by dietary surveys. Economy in nutritional return was also considered in determining quantities of the food groups. Better than average choices will yield higher nutritive values. Allowing a wide variety of food combinations, the plans permit observance of the traditional food habits of most of the population groups in the United States. Having the plans at low and moderate levels of food cost promotes flexibility in use.

Costs of purchasing the kinds and quantities of foods specified in these plans are estimated regularly. (See materials.) The quantities of individual foods used in pricing these plans are based on family food practices—among low-income families for the low-cost plan and among moderate-income families for the moderate-cost one. The prices used are average retail prices for 56 cities collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. As of September 15, 1953, the low-cost plan amounted to \$15.00 to \$16.50 for a family of four consisting of a physically active man, a moderately active woman, a child of 10–12 years, and another of 7–9 years. For a similar family the moderate-cost one came to \$21.50 to \$22.50. Price ranges indicate differences in buying practices within the limits of the food plans.

Using the top estimate for the moderate cost food plan as a basis for figuring, the per capita food cost for nonfarm families in the United States came to \$6.80 per week. This is similar to the average per capita expenditure for food at home reported by city families with incomes from \$2,000 to \$2,999 in the spring of 1948. At that time 55 percent of all families reported spending this much or more. (Adjustment for a 9 percent change in food prices between the two periods has been made.) This shows that the moderate-cost food plan, as its name implies, is somewhat but not much below the level of average expenditures of families.

**Education in Choosing the Right Food.** Various techniques are used for helping homemakers and other food shoppers develop the ability to make good food choices. The table enclosed gives estimated amounts of 60 nationally priced foods and their component nutrients that 10 cents would buy at 1952 prices and suggests one technique for use with persons having a good grounding in nutrition. In addition, it provides basic information for the development of visual aids to suit any level of nutrition education.

The returns for 10 cents given in the table are maximum since they are based on foods as they are brought home from the store without adjustment for nutrient losses in cooking and storing in the home. To call attention to the effect of this and some other conditions which limit the validity of comparisons, some subgroups have been

made within the Basic 7 food groups; for example, vegetables always eaten cooked are separated from those which may be eaten raw and table fats are separated from cooking fats.

Besides the returns in terms of the nine nutrients provided in the table nutritionists will want to take into consideration present day knowledge of the amino acid content of foods that are compared for protein return, the physiological availability of carotene in vegetables compared for vitamin A value, and the presence of interfering substances such as oxalic acid and phytin in utilization of calcium in some foods.

The 60 foods in the table are priced regularly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. (See materials.) Prices used are average retail prices for 56 cities of the United States during 1952, the latest average prices available when this issue was prepared.

**Adaptations.** Use of local prices would add to the value of the kind of illustrative data the table provides. The addition of other foods, especially locally popular and plentiful ones and high-nutrient contributors would also do this as well as affect the ranking of foods and interpretation of results. Nutritive returns for 10 cents worth of any food can be figured using local prices and nutritive values in table 2 of Agriculture Handbook No. 8 or similar source by the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Nutrient per lb.}}{\text{Price per lb. (in cents)}} \times 10 = \text{Nutritive return for 10 cents}$$

**Interpretations.** The table shows best buys among the 60 foods for each nutrient at 1952 prices. A look at the calories contributed in 10-cent purchases reveals that in 1952 lard, sugar, degermed enriched cornmeal, and enriched wheat flour were best buys among these foods. Across-the-board study of the economy of their contribution to all the nutrients shows that the two grain products are among the cheapest sources of the three B-vitamins, protein, and iron as well as of calories whereas lard and sugar contribute calories only.

In ranking the foods by their protein returns for 10 cents, top rank goes to evaporated milk, cheddar cheese, and canned pink salmon when amino acid as well as total protein contents are considered.

Milk and cheddar cheese give the best calcium return for a dime and are cheap contributors of protein and riboflavin as well. Returns from a dime spent for nonfat dry milk would affect the ranking and be a valuable addition to the table.

Among the vegetables listed in the table carrots and sweetpotatoes give the best returns in vitamin A value for money spent. If kale and other dark leafy greens were included they would also give an excellent return in this respect. Among the fats, margarine provides vitamin

A at lowest cost. Liver probably would greatly outrank margarine as a low cost vitamin A source.

Although raw cabbage is ahead of oranges as an economical source of ascorbic acid, comparison with cooked cabbage would probably prove oranges the more economical source.

The nutritional economy of milk products as among the cheap sources of calcium, protein, and riboflavin can be a convincing talking point with those who consider milk only a beverage and a costly one at that. It may help adults who wonder, "Which shall it be—coffee or milk?" to come to the conclusion of Susan Merrow, nutritionist with the Vermont Agricultural Experiment Station. Miss Merrow says, "Have both," in a newspaper article in which she discusses the contribution that milk makes to the nutritional content of meals for all, and that coffee makes for pleasant relaxation at the end of meals for some.

The table also brings out the nutritional effects of modern processing such as enrichment of grain products and fortification of margarine and the cost effect of factory preparation of foods. While flour is listed among the three best buys in calories, thiamine, riboflavin, and niacin none of the three ready-to-eat baked goods gets a top ranking. It is well known that labor saving services included with foods increase the prices paid for nutrients.

## USE OF TIME AND MONEY

In food management time and money vary in importance. Homemakers who are not employed outside the home, especially those in low-income families, may find it to their advantage to substitute time for money somewhat by preparing as much of the family's food at home as they can. Employed homemakers and institution managers, however, may find that the labor saving services included with the food make ready-prepared foods worth their higher prices.

Homemakers seeking ways to stretch their food money may be interested in trying a time and money test recently made by home economists in the Agricultural Research Service. (See materials.) In this short test of selected menus, meals from ready-to-serve foods cost over a third more money and those from partially prepared ones cost a sixth more than meals from foods with least preparation commercially. Those to whom time is the more critical element in the food management job will also be interested. Time costs were in reverse, ready-to-serve foods being assembled into meals in about a fourth the time and partially-prepared foods in about half the time it took to make similar meals practically "from scratch" in the home kitchen. Homemakers making similar tests may come out with answers differing according to the conditions in their home situations.

## MATERIALS

*Listing of these materials is for the information of readers and does not necessarily mean recommendation.* They may be obtained from the addresses given after the name of the publication. The symbols refer to—

ARS—Home Economics Research Branch, Agricultural Research Service, USDA, Washington 25, D. C.

GPO—Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C.

INF—Office of Information, USDA, Washington 25, D. C.

IDS—International Documents Service, Columbia University Press, 2960 Broadway, New York 27, N. Y.

THE NATIONAL FOOD SITUATION. 1954 Outlook Issue. Bur. Agr. Economics. Oct.-Dec. 1953. 25 pp. Agricultural Marketing Service. USDA, Washington 25, D. C.

NUTRITION AND CONSUMER EDUCATION. H. K. Stiebeling; and OUTLOOK FOR FARM FAMILY LIVING COSTS. G. S. Weiss. Bur. Human Nutrition and Home Economics. Papers presented at 1953 Outlook Conference. ARS

NUTRITIVE CONTENT OF CITY DIETS. A summary report, Food Consumption Surveys of 1948-1949. Bur. Human Nutrition and Home Economics. Spec. Rpt. 2. 23 pp., illus. 1950. ARS

CONSUMPTION OF FOOD IN THE UNITED STATES 1909-52. Bur. Agricultural Economics. Agr. Handb. 62. 1953. 249 pp. GPO 70c.

PLENTIFUL FOODS MONTHLY LIST. Published by Food Distribution Div., Agr. Marketing Serv. From Food Distribution Division Area Offices at—139 Centre St., New York 13, N. Y.; 50 Seventh St., N.E., Atlanta 5, Ga.; 185 N. Wabash Ave., Chicago 1, Ill.; 1114 Commerce St., Dallas 2, Texas; and 630 Sansome St., San Francisco 11, Calif.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX. Bur. Labor Statistics. Monthly. From Commissioner of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, Washington 25, D. C. Free.

RETAIL PRICES OF FOOD 1951 AND 1952. Bur. Labor Statistics. Bul. 1141. 37 pp., illus. 1953. GPO 25c

THE DEVELOPMENT AND PRICING OF THE BUREAU OF HUMAN NUTRITION AND HOME ECONOMICS FOOD PLANS AT LOW AND MODERATE COST. Bur. Human Nutrition and Home Economics. FE 26. 8 pp. 1953. ARS

FOOD FOR TWO (L 306. 1951); FOOD FOR THE FAMILY WITH YOUNG CHILDREN (G 5. 1951); FOOD FOR FAMILIES WITH SCHOOL CHILDREN (G 13. 1951); and FOOD GUIDE FOR OLDER FOLKS (G 17. 1952). Bur. Human Nutrition and Home Economics. INF

EATING IS FUN FOR OLDER PEOPLE TOO. Diet Therapy Section of the American Dietetic Association. 17 pp., illus. 1952. The American Dietetic Association, 620 North Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Ill. 50c.

GUIDING FAMILY SPENDING (M 661. 1949) and HELPING FAMILIES PLAN FOOD BUDGETS (M 662. 1950) Bur. Human Nutrition and Home Economics. GPO. 15c each.

TIME AND MONEY COSTS OF MEALS USING HOME- AND PREKITCHEN-PREPARED FOODS. Bur. Human Nutrition and Home Economics. FE 32. 7 pp. 1953. ARS

MATERIAL ON HOME ECONOMICS AND ITS TEACHING. (Bibliography) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 150+ pp. 1953. IDS 50c

SCHOOL FEEDING: ITS CONTRIBUTION TO CHILD NUTRITION. M. L. Scott. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. FAO Nutr. Studies 10. 1953. 129 pp., illus. IDS \$1

PASTEURIZED GRADE A MILK. Nevada Nutrition Council. Folder. 1953. From Mrs. Andrew C. Rice, Agricultural Extension Service, University of Nevada, Reno, Nev. 5c.

PORK—FACTS FOR CONSUMER EDUCATION. I. H. Wolgamot and L. J. Fincher. Human Nutrition and Home Economics. AB 109. 1954. 22 pp., illus. INF

WAYS TO COOK RABBIT (G 35. 1953) and PEANUT AND BUTTER RECIPES (G 36. 1953.) Human Nutrition and Home Economics. INF

RECIPES FOR QUANTITY SERVICE: FOOD SERVICE IX. Bur. Human Nutrition and Home Economics. PA-233. 27 pp. 1953. INF

SLIDEFILMS OF THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE. Agr. Handb. 17. 27 pp. 1953. INF

SOME FINDINGS FROM TELEVISION STUDIES. Lucinda Crile. Extension Serv. 32 pp. 1953. Extension Service, USDA, Washington 25, D. C.

## RESEARCH CARRIES ON

In line with the recent reorganization of the United States Department of Agriculture, work formerly done by the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics is now being conducted by two branches of the Agricultural Research Service: The Human Nutrition Research Branch, and the Home Economics Research Branch.

Dr. Hazel K. Stiebeling is in the office of the Administrator as Director of human nutrition and home economics research, and Dr. Callie Mae Coons and Dr. Ruth O'Brien, respectively, are designated to act as chiefs of the branches.